

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ROME 004107

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [YI](#) [SR](#) [MW](#) [IT](#) [BI](#)

SUBJECT: FRATTINI TO FLOAT EU BALKANS ROADMAP

REF: ROME 3879

1. (SBU) Summary. The Italian MFA December 19 hosted a conference on Balkans issues attended by Albanian Foreign Minister Besnik Mustafaj, Vice President of the European Commission Franco Frattini, and members of the Italian MFA Department for Balkan Affairs. Frattini stated that on January 9, after Austria assumes the EU presidency, the EC would propose a roadmap for EU engagement in the Balkans. The roadmap would call for an EU envoy for Kosovo status talks and Dayton implementation. Mustafaj called Kosovo ground zero for the Albanian question in Europe and insisted that negotiations cannot lead to a return of Kosovo to Serbia. The Serbia/Montenegro DCM read a prepared statement that insisted the international community must "respect international law" and avoid any changes in current boundaries and should not impose a solution in resolving Kosovo's status. Present at the meeting was Amb. Laura Mirachian, who did not hide her disappointment for having been passed over for High Representative in Bosnia. End summary.

2. (SBU) On December 19, the MFA used the visit by the Albanian Foreign Minister to organize a conference on the Balkans entitled "The Balkans, Kosovo: A Challenge for Europe". The Italian conference gave participants, which included Frattini, EC member Emma Bonino and members of the Italian MFA Balkans department, the opportunity to articulate Italy's interests in the Balkans to the public. During the presentations, Frattini noted that the EC would present a roadmap for EU Balkan engagement at a meeting with the Austria EU presidency on January 9. The roadmap would call for an EU envoy to the Balkans and a renewed push for continued EU leadership in Bosnia and Kosovo. Frattini noted that stability in the Balkans affects the entire EU, and therefore, he would press the EU to take a more directive role in its relationships with Balkan countries. (Comment: Post will request additional details on the proposed roadmap from Frattini's office). Frattini added that despite dwindling public support for EU enlargement, he would continue to lobby the EU to hold out the possibility of membership as an incentive for continued democratic and economic reforms in the region.

3. (SBU) Mustafaj began his presentation by stating that Kosovo was "ground zero" for the Albanian "question" in Europe. The current situation could not be allowed to persist. From the Albanian perspective, the situation could not revert to the pre-1999 political arrangement and the international community could not allow Belgrade to enter into the negotiations with a predetermined outcome as their final position. Albania favored "conditional independence" with a strong international presence as the final outcome of status talks. The Serbia/Montenegro ambassador arrived early, greeted participants, and excused himself from the discussion claiming prior engagements. The Serbia/Montenegro DCM read a prepared statement insisting that the international community must recognize international law and avoid any changes in internationally-recognized boundaries. He added that Belgrade was willing to offer the greatest level of autonomy to Kosovo and accept an indefinite international protectorate, but warned that it would reject an imposed solution. (Comment: The SaM ambassador, a Montenegrin, likely excused himself in order to avoid having to read the Belgrade-prepared text.)

4. (SBU) Comment: The conference, while providing no new insights on Italian Balkan policy, was an important part of the GOI's public outreach program to maintain public support for Italian leadership in the region. Amb. Laura Mirachian, the Italian candidate for Bosnian High Representative, attended the conference, perhaps signaling her continued interest in the Balkans despite the fact that she holds no official position in the MFA related to the Balkans. The GOI has given us no official comment on Mirachian's rejection, but the MFA is clearly disappointed. After lobbying intensely for a recognized international leadership position in the Balkans, the GOI believes it was unfairly snubbed by other major EU powers.

SPOGLI